Siphoning off of NREGS funds

*266. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA: Will the Minister of RURAL DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Government investigation into the working of National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has revealed siphoning off of a whopping 40 per cent of this allocation and inadequate implementation in the districts where it is needed most;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the directions given by Centre to States in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI C.P. JOSHI): (a) and (b) The information is being collected.

(c) With a view to check the occurrence of such instances, the Ministry has taken the following steps:

(i) Orders dated 7.9.2009 have been issued directing all State Governments for setting up of the office of Ombudsman at district level for redressal of grievances in a time bound manner.

(ii) A Web enabled Management Information System (MIS) (www.nrega.nic.in) has been made operational which places all critical parameters such as job cards, muster rolls, wage payments, number of days of employment provided and works under execution online for monitoring and easy public access for information.

(iii) Wage disbursement to NREGA workers through Banks/Post Office accounts has been made mandatory to ensure proper disbursement of wages to NREGA workers.

(iv) The Ministry has accorded utmost importance to the organization of Social Audits by the Gram Panchayats and issued instructions to the States to make necessary arrangements for the purpose. Modifications have been made in para 13 of Schedule-I of the Act to provide for procedures on conducting social audits. The Ministry has issued instructions to the State Governments for enforcement of the new social audit provisions under NREGA.

(v) Independent Monitoring by eminent citizens has been approved.

(vi) District level Vigilance and Monitoring Committees have been set up for monitoring of rural development programmes including NREGA.

Upgradation of Waterways

*271. SHRI N. BALAGANGA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) the number of waterways in the country;

(b) when they were made national waterways; and

(c) what steps are being taken by Government to upgrade the national waterways to the international standard?